How Shall I Practice?

ROSEWALD

HOW SHALL I PRACTICE?

How Shall I Practice?

Practical Suggestions to Students
of Vocal Music

BY

JULIE ROSEWALD

Second Edition

SAN FRANCISCO
THE BANCROFT COMPANY
1892

ISSUED FROM THE PRESS OF
THE SAN FRANCISCO PRINTING CO.
411 MARKET ST., S. F.

I beg to return sincere thanks to my pupils and to the musical public for the kind manner in which this little volume has been received and which warrants the issuance of this second edition.

JULIE ROSEWALD.

HOW SHALL I PRACTICE?

TO the many who earnestly ask this question, and to such of my pupils who, when at home, desire to review the oral lessons received from me, and thus have my elementary instructions always within reach, this little book is respectfully dedicated.

JULIE ROSEWALD.

San Francisco,
June, 1892.

INTRODUCTION : : :

WHEN SCIENCE gave us the laryngoscope (throat mirror) it granted us the blessed possibility of restoring a diseased vocal organ, of improving the abnormal condition of the larynx, pharynx, trachea or nose, and in many instances the means of preserving the voice. As science, however, has shed but a dim light on the method of producing a *good tone* in the human voice, we can be guided only by satisfactory *practical* results, obtained in the teachings of this most empyrical of arts. This wonderful age of progress has not given us any lightning process, by means of which a voice can be developed, we must therefore, continue

to abide by the fact, as did the old Italian masters, that good singing is mainly dependant upon long and patient study, and earnest practice. In this little work I will endeavor to illustrate "How to Practice," so as to acquire that most essential part in good singing—*a pure tone*. These suggestions are based upon the teachings of eminent masters abroad, and upon my personal experience, as an instructor.

J. R.

HOW SHALL I PRACTICE?

Ordinarily, the pupil receives from * her teacher, a volume of the many so-called "vocal methods," that contain nothing however, but a number of Solfeggi and Vocalises, and not one syllable regarding the most important point, *how to form a tone.*

The pupil begins to sing the prescribed exercises, and after a brief time, grows annoyed, and flurried at discovering that almost every two tones in her voice, are of a different timbre, the one, *throaty*, another *nasal*, and still another *wheezy*. In fact, her voice is not ready for the Exercises in the Vocal Method, and virtually are intended for voices with tones tolerably

*As I have always declined to train male voices, I make use of the feminine gender throughout these pages when referring to the pupil.

even—how rare, alas! are such voices! The pupil then provides herself with various works on the voice, written by physicians, or perhaps teachers, widely differing in their views, and in some cases, flatly contradicting each other, regarding the theory of singing. As a rule, these works inform the student what faults to combat, or what results to strive for, but give no *practical* explanation, how to avoid the former, or to attain the latter. The reader becomes acquainted with the technical names and the relative positions and duties of the throat muscles, and even finds herself advised by some authorities to practice with the laryngoscope. However as "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing," the student should refrain from making any practical physiological experiments that may result in *habitual muscular efforts*, whilst singing.

Stockhausen, and some other authors say, that with each ascending tone, the larynx *perceptibly* rises, and *vice versa* with descending tones. *Acting upon this suggestion, the student tries to raise or lower her larynx at will in ascending or descending the scale, until her muscles fairly ache. Now, were it possible to *feel* the rising of the larynx at each ascending tone, *where would it reach at the end of our compass*, say two octaves? Furthermore, inasmuch as the larnyx is connected with the tongue-bone, the tongue would naturally also move along, as the larynx rises. The deceptive movement left is the protrusion of the front angle of the shield cartilage (Adam's apple) caused by the elongation of the vocal chords, when singing the ascending scale. The foolish practice

*In ascending tones, one is led to suppose that the larynx rises. As yet, no one however, has been able to give a reliable explanation of the same. (LANDOIS—*Lehrbuch der Physiologie*, 1891).

of trying *to feel* the action of the throat, is the greatest detriment to the voice. The only distinct sensation in the throat during the act of singing should be a gentle closing (not a "shock") of the glottis, and *that only* during the attack of a word beginning with a vowel. The pupil should rather try to forget her throat for the time being. Singers often complain that their throats ache, perhaps after having used the voice for a few moments only. Why? Because they sing *unnaturally*, and lack proper training.

Most voices require careful preparation for the production of single tones and certainly for the singing of scales, arpeggios and other florid passages, and no capable teacher will begin

instructions by requiring the latter from the pupil.

Voices should be treated according to their individualities, and not be collectively dosed with one and the same formula of exercises. As well may we expect a certain recipe in the Pharmacopœia, to suffice for all the ills and ailments of humanity.

DEFECTIVE TONES

DEFECTIVE tones in the voice may be attributed to various causes. Upon discovering an imperfect or a defective tone your teacher will examine your tonsils and palate, and should either of these be of an abnormal size, a good tone will be a physical impossibility. Your "breathing through the nose" should also be tested. If there

be any obstruction (and in this climate many persons suffer from this) it should at once be removed, as a free air-passage through the nose is indispensable. Without it *good singing* is impossible. In all such and similar ailments consult a reliable, skillful specialist, who has made the throat and its diseases a life's study. Your teacher's practiced ear, will also detect the slightest hoarseness, imperceptible perhaps to yourself. In such a case *stop singing at once*, *rest your voice*, and in a day or two you will probably find it restored to its former good condition. Straining the voice only a single time may effect nature's precious gift most seriously: and a damaged voice cannot be replaced by a new one as easily as can a piano or some other musical instrument. Nor can a voice be *made* or *built* any more than you can learn to play the

piano by practicing on a kitchen table. You must have the instrument. Accepting this fact, that you have your instrument (the voice) in perfect condition, begin your *tone studies*.

TONE PRODUCTION

GOOD Tone Production depends, as is well known, upon a perfect control of the breath, and of the muscles, that serve this purpose. Learn to concentrate your breath, so that you can with will (not with throat-power) send it in the shape of a slender air column through the resonance chambers to the sounding board (the hard palate and upper teeth). Of the many methods of breathing suggested by various authorities, experience has taught me that the following is the

most rational: *Breathe naturally, like a man or an infant whose ribs have never been compressed by stays.* The following first breathing exercise will demonstrate this.

BREATHING EXERCISE

DIVESTED of your stays and with loose clothing, assume a recumbent position, without a pillow, so that your shoulder blades strike a flat surface. Place one hand on your lower ribs, the other on your diaphragm, and gently inhale (through the nose) an imaginary, or if on hand a real perfume. You will feel that the muscles between the ribs and the lungs are pushing the ribs sideways, thus giving the lungs room to expand. Simultaneously, the diaphragm will move downwards

(pointedly, like an inverted lid), towards the intestines, leaving additional space for the lungs to expand in this direction also. Having thus filled the lungs, by means of combined rib and diaphragm breathing, which should be perfectly noiseless, and without the aid of the collar-bone, see that you keep ribs and diaphragm absolutely quiet, until *you have counted ten.* Then exhale suddenly, and you will feel the reaction. Repeat this five or six times, holding your breath at each repetition *one second longer than you did the previous time.* Then repeat this entire exercise in an upright position.

In a few days you will be able to go through this breathing exercise when fully dressed and wearing your stays, remembering, however, that the latter should be worn at all times

as loosely as possible, and fastened merely with an elastic cord.

SINGING EXERCISE

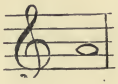
WHEN singing practice is begun, breathe in the same manner as above, thus utilizing your first breathing lesson. This mode of breathing will in itself open your throat as desired. Keep the throat perfectly still; let the necessary breath *float* through, and *whisper** "ah" *three times*, then *sing* it *three times*, then again whisper it the same number of times, all in one breath. Use the same mechanism in singing as you do in whispering, shaping the vowel first, without mak-

NOTE—*There is less danger of throat contraction in *whispering* than there is even in speaking, and it will prove just as effective in giving the correct shape and position to the different organs of speech for the enunciation of any vowel required.

ing any further muscular motion, either with the throat, jaw or tongue. Do not permit the tone to escape straight through the mouth, but *aim diagonally upward* toward the front part of the hard palate, without pushing or pressing. Let a long, thin air current touch that part of the mouth like a soft-arched feather. Unless carefully watched, the diaphragm will collapse (ascend), by which the lungs will be emptied forcibly and the air escape therefrom unvocalized. In such a case, the sound produced will be *tiny* and *wheezy*.

Having now learned to keep the diaphragm and ribs distended, be careful that your throat also keeps open and quiet, avoiding contraction of the strong muscles. This will be

accomplished by watching your work *below* and *above* the larynx; *below* for the sustaining of breath, *above* for its direction. Use the throat as an air passage only, and bestow your entire attention upon the *placement of your tones*. At this point you should test your ability of sustaining your breath by repeating the first singing exercise on



against a hand mirror, the surface of which should remain undimmed.

Proceed to extend the range of practice by whispering and singing the same vowel A, three tones ascending and descending. By whispering *ah*

in an upward direction and then immediately singing the same, you will obtain the correct position for your tone. You will learn to close the glottis gently and secure a *good attack*. You will very soon grow concious of these results by practicing to whisper without harshness, words beginning with a vowel, as: *ever*, *under*, *over*, etc., etc.

Whisper and rapidly speak the syllables, *do*, *re*, *mi*, *fa*, *sol*, *la*.

Then sing *la ah* naturally as you spoke, on the same pitch, and in one breath. Repeat this exercise three times, alternating between the whispering and singing in one breath, making a slight pause between each. This exercise is intended to illustrate the fact that singing should simply be

prolonged speech in melodious form, and should be done with the throat open and perfectly relaxed, with deep breathing and with the tongue, *spoon-shaped limp*, and *flat* against the lower front and jaw teeth. The quantity of air coming from the lungs should be as small as possible. So little breath should be used, that it would almost seem, as if it were coming *toward you*, whilst singing. *Drink it in*, as it were, and it will take its correct shape.

VOWELS

VOWELS should be shaped spontaneously by a quick action of the mouth, which should however remain immovable after the sound has begun.

Before singing a vowel, *think it*, and at the same time give your mouth the

proper shape for its utterance,* so that an observer would readily be able to tell what vowel you are about to pronounce. First *form it*, then *speak it*, and then *sing it*, without moving a muscle of the organs of speech. Practice this exercise invariably with the aid of a hand-mirror. A billiard ball whilst in motion cannot be struck with any certainty as to the course it will take, nor can you sing whilst your mouth is moving to shape the vowel. It would prevent you from *aiming* toward the hard palate with your tone, and this you *must necessarily do*, for if the air-column passes straight from the mouth over the tongue, there will be no concussion and consequently no resonance possible. As concussion, however, causes the tone to rebound, you *must aim as far forward* as possible

NOTE.—*Without this the acoustic properties of the organs of speech will not be correct, and the tone impure. The respective parts of the vocal apparatus must act simultaneously.

against the hard palate. Should it strike the soft palate, it would rebound too far and assume a mushy, throaty reflection. Let the breath, after the concussion in the front of the mouth has taken place, *float there, coming toward you*, instead of pushing it out. This will cause the vibratory rings, or tone waves, to spread quickly, which being unimpeded will fill the space into which you sing, like the rings formed by throwing a stone into water. The slightest downward pressure of the tongue-bone, push from the throat, or collapse of the diaphragm disturbs the perfect shape and beauty of the tone-wave.

When a vowel sounds pure and natural, gauge others by it, remembering that all the other vowels on the same pitch have the same *place of touch*.

VOWELS

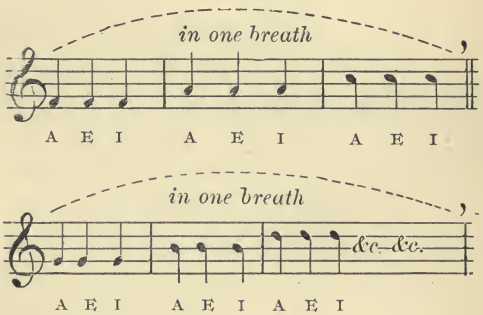
With their Italian Pronunciation

A as in *father — tar*
E " *pen — ten*
I " *eel — knee*
O " *go — know*
U " *hoot— shoe*

SING THESE VOWELS in succession, on one and the same pitch and with the same tone quality. Should you be troubled with *throaty* or *nasal* tones sing the vowels in the following order U–O–A–E–I however, as long as your tone remains *throaty* avoid the A in its broad Italian pronunciation (like in "*father*") but practice it as in *all* or *pall*, and then by degrees change it into the pure *ah*.

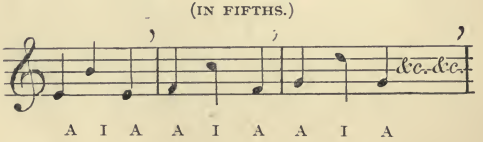
You will also find a good vowel study in Examples A and B. Sing A, E, I, on one pitch and in one breath, in successive *triads*, being careful, however, to shape the mouth quickly according to the requirements of the respective vowels, but without changing the tone quality.

EXAMPLE A.



EXAMPLE B.

(IN FIFTHS.)



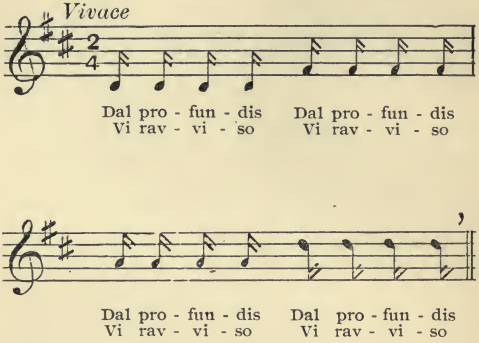
CONSONANTS

ENUNCIATE all consonants distinctly, but rapidly, so that the maximum of time is consumed by the vowel that precedes or follows it, moving your jaws as little as possible.

THROATY TONES

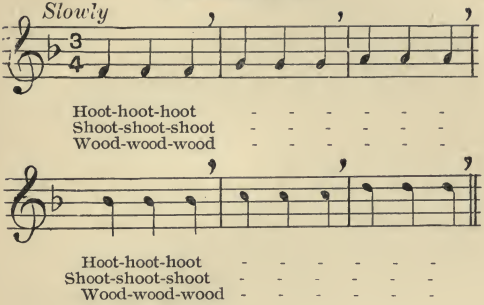
EXAMPLE C will be found an excellent remedy to correct throaty tones. The exercise is to be sung rapidly, in one breath, and in all chords within easy compass of your voice. Place your tone by aiming just behind the spot that your tongue would touch for the consonants L and D, as in *la*, *da*, and sing :

EXAMPLE C.



Should the tone still remain throaty or nasal, practice in a similar manner with words like *hoot*, *shoot*, *wood*, *shoe*, etc., as in Example D, avoiding, however, any pressure or push from the throat, and closely watching the ribs and diaphragm. Practice Example D repeatedly in the middle register, keeping your chin quiet and your throat will remain likewise.

EXAMPLE D.



RAISING THE SOFT PALATE

ANOTHER requirement for the production of a good tone is a complete control of the *soft palate*, which should be well arched. In singing high tones, the *uvula* should almost disappear, but, as in nose breathing (the hygienic way) the soft palate *drops*, it is necessary that you learn how again to raise it before singing.

Stand before a mirror, breathe through the nose (with mouth open) and observe the lowering of the palate. Exhale through the mouth and you will observe the *uvula rise*. Then by aid of a hand mirror, with your back to the sunlight, get a good focus on your mouth and try to see the *back wall* of the pharynx, having accomplished which, you will have succeeded in raising the soft palate. Then repeat this experiment by aid of *will power*.

Practicing flexibility of the soft palate will not only cause it to do its work reliably, but will make its *mucous membrane* and *muscles* tense and hard, otherwise the vocal sound will be *dull* or *woolley*.

LARGE TONSILS AND LONG UVULA : :

SHOULD your tonsils be too large or your uvula too long, the palate will be weighted down by them, and these studies be of no avail. As well might you try to run with weights fastened to your feet. The only remedy is the *removal of the tonsils* or *reducing of the uvula*, and since celebrities like Patti, Lucca Hauck and many others, who have undergone the slight operation, have expressed themselves as highly benefited by the results, *you*, should the occasion demand it, may also submit to the same, without the slightest temerity.

HIGH TONES

TO FACILITATE your high tones, first *think* the pitch, keep the diaphragm down, form a long air column (the longer the better) *aim upward*, and let the tone *float in the mouth*, *drinking it in*, and you will have no trouble. The high tones are often spoiled by a forcible stiffening of the jaws. You will be able to open your throat much more easily with jaws relaxed than if they are too much stretched.

TEETH

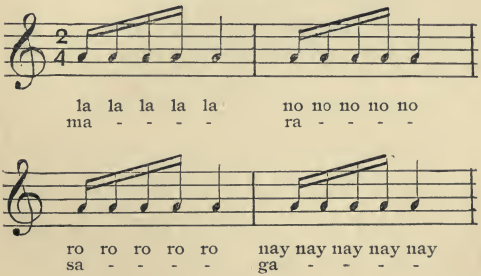
THE teeth should never be separated more than the width of two of your fingers placed upon each other. The edges of the teeth should be visible and not concealed by the lips, as the latter

would of course, act like a cushion and deaden the sound.

THE TONGUE

THE tip of the tongue should be so flexible that almost any syllable can be pronounced without the aid of the jaws. With a view of accomplishing this, these exercises should be *spoken* and *sung* repeatedly and rapidly in one tone, always, however, shaping your mouth for the vowel before pronouncing the syllable.

EXAMPLE E.



Then use dissyllables: *any*, *ever*, *eighteen*, *Edward*, etc. When flexibility of the tongue has been acheived, it will not be difficult to keep the tone forward, despite the interrupting consonants.

TONE COLOR

IT IS a mistake to accept an imperative rule for the shaping of the mouth; for instance, that of "smiling" as is generally taught. Its shape should vary according to the sentiment of the text. As an experiment, sing the words, "my lover is dead," *with the corners of your lips well drawn back*, and observe the ridiculous effect; or, with a very *oval shaped mouth* and *well dropped jaws*, sing, "*I am so happy*," and you will find that your tone belies your words.

The cheerful and bright timbre should be practiced with smiling lips, even when your face is turned from the listener, and the sad or dark timbre with oval shaped mouth. This is called *coloring the sound.* If not well done, the words will sound ineffective, and even incongruous. It is therefore highly essential to understand how to produce the *light* or *dark* timbre, as scarcely any two lines in a song can be sung with either one of them alone.

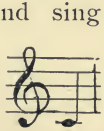
For the dark timbre practice with words like *all—fall—appalling*, etc.

For the light timbre use: *tea—dee—knee;* or, *nay—may—fay—ray*, etc.

Speak these syllables repeatedly before a mirror (this will cause the organs of speech to adjust themselves naturally), then sing them just as you spoke them.

CHEST TONES

WHEN SINGING chest tones, *do not aim downward*, as nothing can be sung below the larynx. *Aim upward*, even for *low tones*, they merely reverberate but are not formed in the chest. Hold your breath and sing la, la, la. on



low C, placing your tone where the tongue touches for the 'l' in la, and you will hear a good ringing chest tone. As a test, tap the chest lightly

with your fingers whilst singing, and you will feel the vibration.

BREAK IN VOICE

A "BREAK" in the voice results from one of three errors:

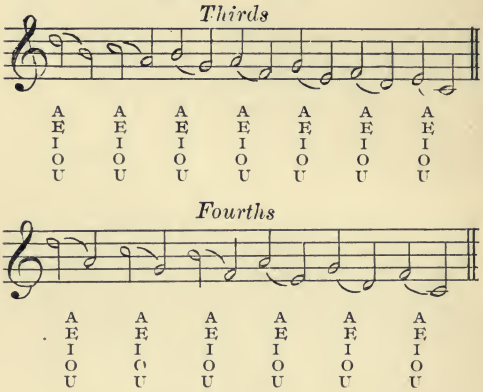
1. Forcing the chest tones.

2. Forcing their range beyond the natural limit which causes a reaction on the first middle register tones, making them sound weak.

3. Permitting the tone to slip back into the mouth toward the soft palate. In fact a "break" simply means *bad singing*; a good remedy and one that will at the same time equalize the chest and middle register is example F. Start from a naturally good tone in your middle register, remembering the place of touch (so that where one

tone ceases the other begins) and sing thirds, fourths and fifths descending.

EXAMPLE F.



Repeat with interval of fifth

With sopranos, the break mostly occurs with the *first head tones*, they should therefore reverse this study by starting on a good middle register tone and singing the same exercise, *ascending*.

To prevent the "break" keep the throat from contracting, *avoid the*

portamento, and draw up only a thread of air with more mental than physical action.

Play *with vocalized air* and not with agonized muscles.

EXECUTION

IN ALL of these exercises the first principle, control of breath, should always be remembered. If you gain this, and sing without any muscular effort, you will find that execution or flexibility of voice will follow without much labor. You will succeed almost mechanically. A great assistance in attaining execution will be found by singing *descending scales slowly*, keeping the sensation of touch in your mind, so that each tone is begun where its predecessor stopped. But even when the scale

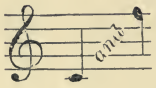
descends, aim upward. Very soon the scales will assume smoothness and rapidity, and by the same process, coupled with economy of breath, the trill will also be easily attained.

PRESERVING THE VOICE

BEWARE OF EXTENDING your studies beyond the first head tones upward, or first chest tones downward, until absolute freedom and purity of tone is acquired within an easy compass of your voice. This precaution will help to strengthen and preserve your vocal organs. The voice is very elastic, but like a piece of rubber, when pulled at both ends, it is apt to snap in the middle.

The basis of able singing is a good resonant, and rich middle register. Nine tones out of ten in almost every

composition for soprano, mezzo-soprano, and even for alto are to be found between



Extremely high tones are *accidental* and *incidental* to sopranos, and extremely low tones are just as rare for contraltos. There is absolute safety, in practicing all vocal studies in the middle register. Patti declares that this mode of daily exercise has liberally contributed toward the wonderful preservation of her voice. Sopranos should never attack a tone *ascending*, nor altos *descending*, until the tone preceding it is so perfectly developed, as to sound as if a half dozen higher or lower tones could be struck. After having learned how to sing the middle range with freedom and perfect ease (which will not fatigue you in the

least), you will be surprised how readily your compass will increase from day to day.

HOW LONG TO PRACTICE

NEVER EXCEED *fifteen minutes* at a time in your practicing. You should strive to obtain quality, not quantity. Remember also that the vocal organs, during singing, become more or less congested and must have the necessary time to cool off. The length of time that is actually consumed by any of the principal singers in an opera is a subject upon which very little thought is generally bestowed. Let us, for instance, take the rôle of the prima donna. During an opera of four acts, lasting generally three hours, there are three intermissions (between

the acts) none of them of less duration than from ten to fifteen minutes, and even longer than this when a change of costume, or (as for the last act of Aida,) a heavy stage setting is required. This leaves but a little over *two* hours for the actual performance of the entire music. An opera generally begins with a chorus, followed by solos by the bass, tenor or alto, until finally the prima donna sings her aria that rarely ever exceeds ten minutes in length. Here she probably leaves the stage, not again appearing until the next act to sing, perhaps, in an ensemble number or another aria. Thus, when properly analysed, the entire rôle of the prima donna in any of the standard operas will be found not to exceed forty minutes of actual singing, and this distributed in a performance lasting three hours. In well-organized opera companies in

Europe, the prima donna rarely sings oftener than three times in one week. Since composers are so considerate for voices in a well trained condition, how much more careful and prudent ought you to be, whose voice is as yet undeveloped, and who are just beginning to learn how to properly use the resources at your command. Beware of rubbing off the bloom, for like that of the peach, it can never be replaced when once destroyed.

Work mentally more than physically. *Think* every tone first, then sing it. Use your brains and do not sing mechanically, for the mind is the engineer that controls and directs the tones. This is the way I would advise you to practice.

JULIE ROSEWALD.

THE SAN FRANCISCO PRINTING CO.
JAS. A. PARISER, MANAGER
411 MARKET STREET